

# FACT SHEET



## Omaha Lead Site Omaha, Nebraska

July 1999

### INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet presents the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 7 plans to continue conducting soil sampling and begin removing soils contaminated with lead in certain areas of the Omaha, Nebraska, and Council Bluffs, Iowa.

### SAMPLING ACTIVITIES

The EPA began a sampling effort in March 1999 at child care facilities and selected residences in the Omaha metropolitan area. EPA's initial sampling focused primarily on child care facilities because of the high number of children 6 years of age and younger at those locations. Children 6 years and younger are more vulnerable to lead poisoning.

The child care facilities sampled were located primarily east of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in Omaha, because of information supplied by the Douglas County Health Department indicating that there was a higher frequency of children with elevated blood lead (EBL) levels in that area.

Out of the initial 156 child care facilities sampled, 39 had one or more samples exceeding the 400 parts per million (ppm) health-based action level. EPA's initial soil sampling assessment is approximately half finished.

At this time, EPA is sampling selected residential properties located within 0.3 mile wide corridors radiating from the downtown

### HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

#### Reducing Child Exposure

The EPA and health agencies recommend limiting exposing young children to lead contaminated soil. This can be accomplished in the following ways:

**! Wash children's hands after playing outside and before meals.**

**! Wash toys periodically and encourage children not to put toys in their mouths.**

**! Vacuum and dust inside the home often to remove dust that may have lead in it.**

**! Use only washed sand, wood chips or other known lead-free materials in outdoor play areas.**

Omaha area. EPA does not plan to include any additional residential properties in this initial assessment. However, EPA is aware that there are a number of child care facilities east of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street that have not had their soil tested for lead. EPA will continue efforts to get access to those facilities in the upcoming weeks.

No soil testing will be done without the written permission of the property owner. All costs related to the testing will be paid by EPA.

The entire sampling process takes about one hour to complete. A total of about two cups of soil will be collected from various locations around each yard and tested for lead and other metals. The results for each property will be mailed to each property owner after a quality control analysis has been performed. In addition, data from each property will be used to develop a map of the Omaha metropolitan area (including Council Bluffs, Iowa) showing locations where high lead concentrations have been found. This map will be used as a tool to identify any trends that may point to parties responsible for the contamination. It will also be used to inform the public about the progress of the investigation.

## **CLEANUP ACTIVITIES**

In August, EPA will begin cleaning up lead contaminated yards at child care facilities. Cleanup actions will involve excavating the top layer of soil from the contaminated area(s) of the property and backfilling the yard with clean soil. All excavated areas will be re-vegetated with sod or grass seed. EPA plans on restoring the yards, as nearly as possible, to their original condition. All removal activity will be conducted at no-cost to the property owner.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

If you live in Douglas County and suspect that someone in your home has elevated lead levels in their body, EPA recommends that you call Reid Steinkraus with the Douglas County Health Department at (402) 444-7489. Free lead testing is available for any child between the ages of 6 months and 6 years old.

If you live in Council Bluffs and suspect that someone in your home has elevated lead levels in their body, EPA recommends that you call your family doctor and explain your concern. If you do not have a family doctor, please call Donn Dierks with the Council Bluffs Department of Health at (712) 328-4666.

If you have questions about this fact sheet, or need more information about the site, contact:

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